Banasree Dey* / Jones Mathew / Shalini Srivastava

Does Consumer Need for Uniqueness Influence Travel Decision-Making?

Abstract

The present paper aims to assess the impact of Consumer Need for Uniqueness (CNFU) in tourists on travel decision-making, particularly, with regard to preferred destination types and activity preferences. The impact of self-attributed need for uniqueness (SANU) in moderating the aforementioned relationships is also examined. The data has been collected using a cross sectional survey on a sample of 288 tourists from various destinations in India. The hypotheses were tested through CFA and SEM using SPSS. The findings indicate that an individual with more need for uniqueness, both as a psychological trait and as a consumer disposition, may prefer unique destinations and unique activities in comparison to those with lower SANU and CNFU. This has important implications for travel and tourism marketers who may appeal to the NFU trait in tourists while promoting travel destinations and activity packages that provide unique, curated experiences for better acquisition and retention efforts.

Keywords: consumer need for uniqueness, self-attributed need for uniqueness, preferred destination types, activity preferences, travel decision-making, India

1. Introduction

Travelers are increasingly seeking unique tourism experiences as well as off-beat, unexplored destinations. There is a desire for authentic and customized experiences rather than routine vacations (Mya, 2020; Peltier & Sheivachman, 2018; Jain, 2018). This has implications for travel service providers and destination marketing organizations who would require a better understanding of the needs and characteristics of these discerning travelers looking for unique destinations and experiences. An enhanced understanding of the factors driving travel decision-making would enable destination marketers to design relevant tourism experiences and have more targeted and focused promotions (Hanlan et al., 2006; Buhalis, 2000). For example, it has been pointed out that destination marketing organizations need to improve the design of their websites to suitably reflect the flow experience for tourists with different personality types (Jeon et al., 2017). To project their destinations as unique, destination managers need a clearer understanding of the traits and characteristics of targeted market segments (Vinyals-Mirabent, 2019). Accordingly, this paper delves into certain questions pertaining to the traits/characteristics of specific types of travelers seeking off-beat and unique travel experiences/destinations. Could the desire for unique and novel tourism experiences be triggered by an inherent personality trait or motivation of a tourist? Could such drives lead to specific travel-related decisions like the choice of a destination or the activities/experiences that tourists seek? Is it possible that the trait 'need for uniqueness' (NFU), which indicates the desire for differentness in individuals (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977) may influence tourists in their travel decision-making?

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The role of personality in predicting vacation choice and activities undertaken has been explored in extant literature (Jeon et al, 2017). Personality traits such as novelty-seeking (Assaker et al., 2011), variety-seeking and sensation-seeking (Yıldırım & Çakici, 2020; Lepp & Gibson, 2008; Galloway, 2002) have been examined in the tourism context. The relationship between Big five factors and travel personality has also been assessed in order to guide tourism professionals about designing better travel products for tourists with diverse personality types (Jani, 2014). However, there is scant literature about the applications of the NFU construct in the services domain including tourism. In the adventure travel market, Schneider and Vogt (2012) examine the relationship between seven personality traits and adventure travel propensity, one of which is need for uniqueness. Again, Čivre and Kolar (2014) investigate the concept of CNFU on a group of young adults to assess its applicability as a segmentation base. Chan et al. (2016) found that desire to consume unique products and avoidance of rituality are important drivers of tourist behavior. Zinelabidine et al. (2018) have also hinted that tourists may explore alternative vacation ideas driven by the need for uniqueness. However, the role of the NFU construct on various sub-decisions of the traveler's decision making has not yet been adequately addressed by researchers. This study aims to fill the gap. Two significant decisions that need to be taken by tourists are: where to go and what to do during the trip. Therefore, the present paper aims to investigate the impact of CNFU in tourists on travel decisions like preferred destination types and activity preferences. This study hopes to assist and contribute to tourism destination marketers' efforts in identifying and communicating with a certain type of tourists – the self-declared unique destination and activity-seeking tourists. This is a segment of the burgeoning group of travelers who are niche and may be willing to pay a premium for unique locations and activities. In one study on customers' willingness to pay a price premium, perceived uniqueness has been identified as the strongest predictor of that willingness to pay higher (Munir et al. 2017). This has significant implications for destination marketers who may be able to create a competitive advantage for novel destinations if they could identify, package and create the right perception of the uniqueness of their tourism product (both destination and activity packages) for attracting high CNFU tourists.

Besides, we propose that the 'Self-attributed Need for Uniqueness' (SANU) may exhibit a moderating influence on the relationships between CNFU in tourists and preferred destinations types as well as CNFU in tourists and their activity preferences. We believe that individuals with high CNFU, moderated by their high SANU, may make certain choices with regard to destination types and travel activities. This proposition draws form the work of Lynn and Harris (1997b) which establishes a relationship between SANU and consumer preferences (desire for rare, innovative/tailored products and uncommon shopping settings). Further, these authors report that "these relationships are mediated by a latent variable reflecting individual differences in the tendency to pursue uniqueness through consumption". The moderating role of SANU has not been examined in extant tourism literature.

Hence, the objectives of the study are:

a. To assess the influence of CNFU in tourists on preferred destination types
b. To explore the effect CNFU in tourists on their activity preferences
c. To examine the moderating effect of SANU on the relationship between CNFU in tourists and preferred destination choice and preferred tourist activity choice

The remaining part of this paper is structured as follows. Initially, a literature review on the primary constructs of the study is presented. A discussion on the proposed hypotheses and the research model follows. Issues pertaining to the study methodology are discussed next. Thereafter, a discussion of the data analysis and findings is provided. To conclude, the contributions of the study along with implications and directions for future research are provided.

2. Literature review

Like users of other products, tourists too consume the travel product driven by internal influences such as a person's perceptions, motivation and personality impacting the way they take decisions (Schiffman et al., 2016). A tourist purchasing a travel product engages in a decision-making process that culminates in the travel purchase decision which includes several smaller decisions regarding aspects such as where to go, when to go, what to do while on a vacation and how to get there (Bjork & Janson, 2008). With tourists, certain factors that affect the decision-making may include internal variables such as attitudes, motivations (e.g. desire for escape, rest and relaxation) and personality characteristics besides external factors like attractiveness of a destination (Seyidov & Adomaitiene, 2016; Leung & Law, 2010). One of the factors that may have a significant impact on travel decision making is the Need for Uniqueness (NFU) trait in tourists.

2.1. Consumer need for uniqueness

A consumer behaves in a specific manner during purchase decision-making based on inherent personality traits. One such trait is the 'need for uniqueness'. Uniqueness refers to a 'positive striving for differentness relative to others' (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977). It has been observed that people tend to differentiate themselves from others since high levels of similarity make them uncomfortable (Syder & Fromkin, 1980). Lynn and Harris (1997a) suggest that the desire to differentiate themselves may encourage consumers to seek consumer products that most people do not possess. This desire, labeled as 'desire for unique consumer products' is a 'goal-oriented state' whose strength/intensity, varies across individuals. There could be certain reasons behind the differences in this desire: NFU, status aspiration and materialism (Lynn & Harris, 1997a). Further, Lynn and Harris (1997b) assess the effect of individual differences in NFU on consumer dispositions. They establish a relationship between consumers' dispositional NFU and their inclinations for rare products, consumer innovativeness, consumer conformity and choice of shopping location.

Consumer Need for Uniqueness (CNFU), a manifestation of NFU in the consumer domain, is a well-researched construct that has been assessed regarding its antecedents and consequences (Butcher et al., 2017; Snyder & Fromkin, 1977; Snyder & Fromkin 1980; Tian et al., 2001). Tian et al. (2001) define CNFU as the "trait of pursuing differentness relative to others through the acquisition, utilization and disposition of consumer goods for the purpose of developing and enhancing one's self image and social image". They posit that CNFU includes three behavioral dimensions: creative choice counter-conformity, unpopular choice counter-conformity and avoidance of similarity. Moreover, NFU influences CNFU and may be expressed through the purchase/display of unique products (Ruvio et al., 2008).

The constructs NFU and CNFU have been examined from varying perspectives and contexts. For instance, Kao (2013) examined the role of CNFU on consumer intentions to switch brands. Ranjbarian et al. (2011) explored the association between ethnocentrism and five consumption habits (in Iranian consumers), one of which is NFU. NFU has also been examined from social, economic and cultural perspectives in a study of Japanese consumers (Cheema & Kaikati, 2010). Certain studies assessed the influence of NFU/CNFU on specific demographic segments, for example, the link between NFU and fashion innovativeness among young consumers in South Africa (Dlodlo, 2014), and comparative assessment of NFU in Hispanic versus non-Hispanic teenagers in the context of fashion clothing (Chattalas & Harper, 2007). The relationship between NFU and inclinations for specific shopping outlets has also been examined (Tian & McKenzie, 2001). Studies on NFU/CNFU have found applications in product categories like clothing, cars, perfumes, and luxury brands (Bhaduri & Stanforth, 2016; Manikandan & Rajamohan, 2014; Tseng & Balabanis, 2017). But, there is relatively limited application in the services context including tourism.

In this paper, we explore the impact of CNFU in the tourism context and also try to assess the relationship of an individual trait SANU on the behavior of tourists as consumers. SANU is a person's self-evaluation

of his own tendency to pursue differentness both as a consumer of goods/services and also in a non-market context (Lynn & Harris 1997b). CNFU, on the other hand, is the marketplace expression of SANU in the "acquisition, acquisition, utilization and disposition of consumer goods for the purpose of developing and enhancing one's self image and social image" (Tian et al. 2001). We believe that SANU has an influence on the expression of NFU in the domain of tourist behavior with respect to choice of destination type and tourist activities while on vacation. We, thus propose the following:

H1: There is a positive association between SANU in tourists and their CNFU.

Moreover, as discussed earlier, the travel-decision making of tourists may be influenced by the inherent personality traits of tourists, in this case the CNFU in tourists. This trait may influence their travel behavior with regard to the types of destinations they prefer and their activity preferences. The following sections discuss these associations between tourists' CNFU and their preferences for destinations and activities.

2.2. Preferred destination types

There are several studies that have categorized tourism into types. According to Lickorish and Jenkins (1997), business, leisure, education, health and pilgrimages are important motivations for travel. Tureac and Anca (2008) classify tourism based on the purpose of the trip as: relaxing tourism, relaxing and healthcare tourism, visiting tourism, transit tourism, reducing distance tourism and professional tourism. Kušen (2010) proposes a functional classification of tourism attractions which includes sixteen types.

In keeping with the above, if we consider leisure/pleasure travel only (thus excluding business travel and visiting friends/relatives), then, travel destinations may be broadly categorized into a few types (shown in Table 1): (a) Natural or Nature-based, (b) Cultural/Heritage, (c) Spiritual, (d) Health and Wellness/Healthcare, (e) Educational, (f) Adventure Travel and Sports (g) Sports.

Table 1
Destination types

Destination type	Researcher (s)
• Natural or nature-based	Alaeddinoglu & Can (2011)
• Cultural/heritage	Clarke (2010), McKercher & du Cros (2003)
• Spiritual	Lickorish & Jenkins (1997), WTO (2007), Nolan & Nolan (1992)
• Health and wellness/healthcare	Lickorish and Jenkins (1997), Tureac & Anca (2008)
• Educational	Lickorish & Jenkins (1997), WTO (2007)
• Adventure travel	Zurick, 1992
• Sports	Deery et al. (2007), Kurtzman & Zauhar (2005)

Source: Literature review.

The literature discusses factors influencing the choice of destinations by tourists. These include: perception of safety among tourists (Jensen & Svendsen, 2017), motivation and image of destination on destination choice (Hsieh, 2016) and sustainable attitudes of tourists (Zgolli & Zaeim, 2018). Moreover, Lepp and Gibson (2008) found evidence that sensation-seeking, a personality trait; may affect travel styles and vacation choices. It is our contention that the personality trait NFU, manifested in consumer choices with regard to tourism i.e. CNFU in tourists, impacts their destination preferences. This is in keeping with the argument of Styvén and Foster (2018) that the selection of travel destinations may be a means of conveying uniqueness by tourists. Thus, we put forward the following hypothesis.

H2: There is a positive association between CNFU in tourists and their preferred Destination Types.

Besides the preferences of tourists regarding destinations, one other significant factor in the travel decision-making of tourists is the kind of activities preferred by them. An understanding of this would enable destination marketers to develop suitable activity packages for tourists with unique preferences and promote the same to discerning tourists.

2.3. Travel activity preferences

Activity preferences of tourists have been primarily used in extant literature as a segmentation variable (Pesonen & Tuohino, 2017; Zoltan & McKercher, 2015; Hsieh, O'Leary & Morrison, 1992). A study in Finland identified 3 segments of rural tourists based on activity preferences and these segments differed with respect to information search behavior and socio-demographic characteristics (Pesonen & Tuohino, 2017). Eusébio and Carneiro (2015) identified four segments of young consumers (culture lovers, fun lovers, sun and beach lovers and nature lovers) using an activity based segmentation approach. Again, three segments based on preferred vacation activities, labelled as conservatives, fun seekers, and variety seekers; were distinguished from a sample of outbound leisure travelers in Saudi Arabia (Mumuni & Mansour, 2014). Also, Finsterwalder and Laesser (2013) have used activity segmentation for outbound travelers and discussed how these may be the basis for creation of experiential consumption spheres by tourists. Table 2 summarizes the activity preferences of tourists that have been highlighted in tourism literature.

Table 2
Activity preferences of tourists

Activities	Researcher (s)
• Nature trips/safaris	Yun et al. (2011)
• Mountain climbing	Kara (2016)
• Camping	Kara (2016), Paige & Littrell (2003), Yun et al. (2011)
• Golfing	Paige & Littrell (2003), Chen et al. (2016)
• Shopping for local arts and crafts	Tang et al. (2016)
• Hiking/trekking	Paige & Littrell (2003), Tang et al. (2016), Yun et al. (2011)
• Visiting beaches/sunbathing	Paige & Littrell (2003), Kara (2016)
• Fishing	Chen et al. (2016)
• Visiting villages/rural countryside	Chen et al. (2016), Paige & Littrell (2003)
• Winter sports	Paige & Littrell (2003), Chen et al. (2016)
• Extreme sports (such as rock climbing, rappelling)	Paige & Littrell (2003), Chen et al. (2016)
• Photography/taking videos etc.	Choi & Sung (1999)
• Attending local festivals or events	Yun et al. (2011), Tang et al. (2016), Chen et al. (2016)
• Sampling local food and/or drinks	Yun et al. (2011)
• Horse riding	Yun et al. (2011)
• Observing wildlife (including birdwatching)	Yun et al. (2011)
• Water sports (e.g. rafting)	Chen et al. (2016)
• Visiting historical and cultural attractions (e.g. historical sites, museums, galleries)	Yun et al. (2011), Tang et al. (2016), Chen et al. (2016)
• Adventure sports (such as paragliding)	Sung et al. (1997)
• Mountain biking	Sung et al. (1997)
• Shopping	Jeffrey & Xie (1995), Sung et al. (1997), Choi & Tsang (1999)
• Swimming	Choi & Tsang (1999)
• Local sightseeing	Hsieh et al. (1992)
• Bicycle riding	Chen et al. (2016)
• Spa/wellness	Chen et al. (2016)

Source: Literature review.

Though limited in number, certain studies investigate the influences on activity preferences and participation of tourists. A study in Norway investigated the influence of travel party mix on activity patterns of tourists engaging in nature-based tourism (Chen et al., 2016). Pizam and Fleischer (2005) explored the impact of Hofstede's cultural dimensions (uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity and individualism/collectivism) on the choice of tourist activities (active versus passive). Moreover, Lee et al. (2015) reported the influence of travel lifestyles on activity preferences in a destination both with regard to the Slow Food members and non-members. Interestingly, the influence of the psychological traits of risk-taking and sensation-seeking with regard to travel behavior of students from different countries were examined by Pizam et al. (2004) and the results revealed a significant impact on activity choice. We contend that the NFU personality trait manifested through the use of travel products, i.e. CNFU in tourists has an influence on the activity preferences of travelers. A tourist with a high CNFU may have activity preferences that are different from those of tourists with low CNFU. Thus, we propose:

H3: There is a positive association between CNFU in tourists and their Activity Preferences.

Apart from the impact of consumers' NFU on their travel related decisions, we feel that it may be worthwhile to examine the role of the psychological construct SANU (which relates to an inherent personality trait in individuals) on the association between a consumer disposition and behavior. The following section, therefore, posits the moderating effect of SANU on the relationships between CNFU and the aforementioned travel decisions.

2.4. Moderating role of self-attributed need for uniqueness (SANU)

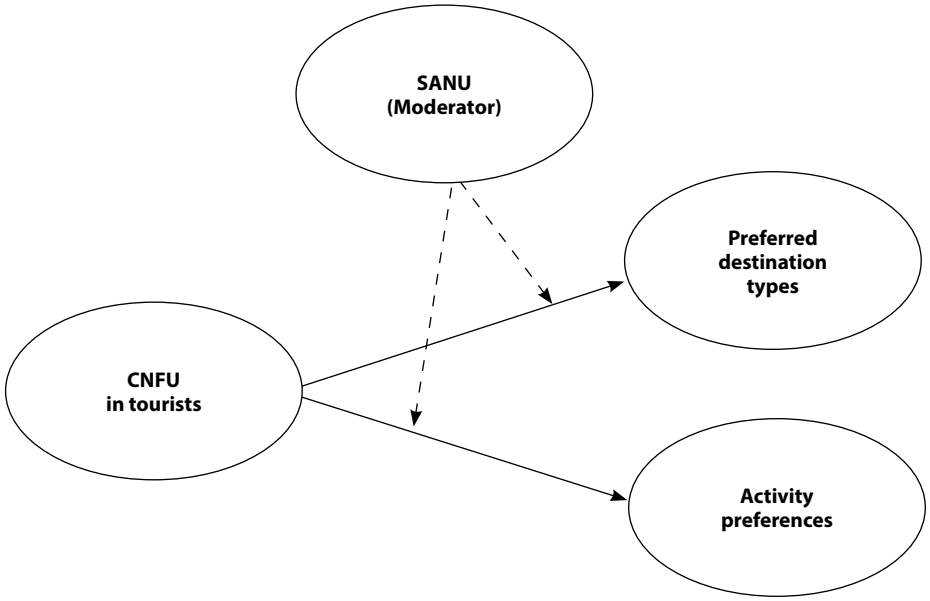
It has been posited that individuals with a high disposition for uniqueness seeking have an inclination to acquire scarce products whereas people with a low dispositional uniqueness do not (Lynn, 1987). Lynn and Harris (1997b) proved that their SANU scale was more sensitive to the desire for scarce products (for instance, less frequented tourist destination spots and tourist activity). The scarcer the offering, the more people with a high SANU will desire it. A study assessing the scales of NFU seems to lend support to the argument that the presence of higher private self-consciousness in an individual (captured by SANU) could enhance the impact of CNFU on travel choices (Lalot et al., 2019). According to them, people expressing SANU may depend to a larger extent on private ways (such as consumption behavior) of fulfilling their NFU. Accordingly, the presence of higher SANU in a tourist may be reflected in the choice of off-beat travel activities such as Heli-skiing in Idaho. Thus, we posit that SANU has a moderating effect on CNFU such that preferred destination type choice and preferred activity will be more unique for high (versus low) CNFU tourists. This is in keeping with the suggestions of Styvén and Foster (2018) which hint at using NFU as a moderator in future research on tourism. Thus, we put forward the following hypotheses:

H4: SANU will moderate the association between CNFU in tourists and Preferred Destination Types such that the relationships are stronger for tourists with higher levels of SANU.

H5: SANU will moderate the association between CNFU in tourists and their Activity references such that the relationships are stronger for tourists with higher levels of SANU.

As discussed above, we believe that NFU manifested in tourists as consumers (i.e. CNFU) would influence their choices with regard to destinations and activity preferences. Further, it is our contention that higher the SANU in individuals, greater will be the influence of CNFU on travel decisions (specifically, choice of destination type and activity preferences. Based on the above discussion and the proposed hypotheses, the research model is proposed as follows:

Figure 1
Research model



3. Methodology

A cross sectional survey plan was employed to obtain responses from tourists. A 46 item survey instrument was designed, pilot tested, validated and used to gather information. Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS 16) and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 20) were used for data analyses.

3.1. Study context

The study's primary objective was to investigate the role of individual differences in the effect of the consumer need for uniqueness on tourism decision making. The study is based on the assumption that the relationship between the proposed study variables can be sufficiently examined in the context of tourism decision making because decision making for such services is likely to be affected by individual differences among tourists. The impact of individual differences - in this case, the need for uniqueness (NFU) of tourists – on tourism decisions is a context that needs to be examined since there have been only a few studies in this area and that too largely in the domain of adoption of self-service technologies in hospitality settings (Kim et al, 2012); choice of self-organized versus travel agency based travel arrangements (Čivre & Kolar, 2014); reflected appraisal of self, need for uniqueness and opinion leadership on in-trip sharing of eWOM on social media (Styvén & Foster, 2014); CNFU in restaurant experiences during tourism (Hyun & Park, 2015) and other very specific areas. This paper on the other hand attempts to look at CNFU and destination choices broadly with SANU as a moderator of those choices.

India is a rapidly growing market for tourism services with many Indian locations reaching "the top tourist destinations list in the world" (Lifestyle Desk, 2019) and the country as a whole making the biggest improvement among the top performers in global tourism, jumping from 40th in 2017 to 34th in the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2019 published by the World Economic Forum (TNN, 2019). Most of the world's leading hotel brands have a major presence in India such as Marriott, Hyatt and Sheraton, as well as global travel and hotel aggregators such as Trivago, Expedia, Airbnb, and Thomas Cook. In addition, marketers need to adequately understand the needs and behavior of Gen Y and Gen Z customers who form a

large part of the Indian consumer base, approximately totaling 68% (Ministry of Home Affairs, GOI, 2011). Therefore, this context is very relevant for the conduct of this study. The study is also very relevant because for the purposes of brand image, the uniqueness of the destination is critical to the destination's desired positioning. A unique positioning makes the brand unique and distinguishable for high uniqueness travelers (Vinyals-Mirabent, 2019). It's the unique attractions and hidden gems that make certain destinations worth visiting more. The context of the study is very important also because tourism studies (Cheng & Lio, 2001; Darden & Perrreault, 1975; Plummer, 1974; Zins, 1998) have suggested that psychographic variables were superior to demographic variables in segmentation exercises. CNFU being a psychological variable is worth studying by marketers of tourist destinations and tourist activities to successfully segment and target tourists who have a high need for uniqueness.

3.2. Questionnaire design

The questionnaire was developed using the expertise of two experts selected on the basis of their experience in the industry, research and academics and the drafted questionnaire was pre-tested. Prescribed validity and reliability tests to ensure the robustness of the questionnaire were performed. A cognitive interview of seven potential study participants using the instrument was conducted to identify any ambiguity and for suggesting revisions to be made. Minor changes were made to the framing of the questions and their sequencing to enhance understandability and remove all bias. Finally, the questionnaire was pilot tested with a sample of 40 people who had travelled for tourism purposes.

3.3. Measures

The following measures were carefully chosen based on literature review and after assessing their usefulness to the study context. Two of the measures were existing scales and the content was slightly modified according to the Indian context. The measures were further refined to ensure reliability. CNFU was measured using the 12–item parsimonious version of the original 31-item CNFU scale (Tian, et al, 2001) developed by Ruvio et al. (2008). Some sample questions are *"I often choose my vacations in such a way that I create a personal image that is hard to copy for others"* (creative counter-conformity choice; CCC); *"I have often violated the prevailing rules of my social group regarding where to travel"* (Unpopular counter-conformity choice; UCC) and, *"I often try to avoid travel destinations that I know are visited by the general population"* (Avoidance of Similarity; AS). CCC, UCC and AS are subscales of the CNFU measurement instrument.

Tourists' self-declared uniqueness predisposition was measured using an existing 4-item scale called the Self Attributed Need for Uniqueness (SANU) scale developed by Lynn and Harris (1997b). The four questions in the scale modified for the Indian context included "I prefer being different from other people", "Being distinctive is important for me", "I intentionally do things to make myself different from those around me" and "I have a need for uniqueness". Each question had a set of five options in the form of a 5-point Likert-type scale. The measure for destination types was based on literature review (refer Table 1) and the judgment of experienced persons from industry, research and academics. The 15 item section in the questionnaire attempts to cover all possible destination types that tourists prefer to travel to. A 5 point Likert-type scale was used to measure interest level in various different destination types ranging from Least Interested to Most Interested. The measure for preferred activity type was devised based on a review of the literature (refer Table 2) and the judgment of experienced persons from industry, research and academics. The 26 item measure has attempted to list all possible tourist activities that tourists generally pursue on vacations. A 5 point Likert-type scale was used to measure preference level in pursuing various tourist activities ranging from Least Preferred to Most Preferred.

3.4. Pretest

A pretest (pilot) study was conducted on a sample of 40 tourists, the outcome of which was the development of the final questionnaire. The respondents for the pretest had similar characteristics to the current study's proposed target respondents. Results of the pretest offered confidence that the questions were adequately understood by the respondents and assured reliability of the survey scales.

3.5. Sample selection

The survey instrument was filled by tourists who had travelled in the past one year or who were currently travelling at the time of the study. This helped ensure that their decision-making process in making tourism/ travel related decisions was fresh or recallable without the passage of too much time having had a negative effect on their memory. Reaching such consumers using probability sampling was difficult because access to personalized and granular tourist information data is non-existent for researchers due to privacy and legal reasons. Moreover, hotels do not allow data collection in their premises. Due to the aforesaid reasons convenience sampling method was used to collect information. The data was collected from 7 destinations across the length and breadth of India from December 2018 to March 2019 as this four month duration is the high tourist traffic period at these 7 locations (LonelyPlanet.com). These 7 destinations – Cochin (Kerala State – South India) (Ministry of Tourism, GOI, 2019); Jaipur (Rajasthan State - West India) (Lifestyle Desk, 2019); Agra (Lifestyle Desk, 2019) and Jim Corbett National Park (Uttar Pradesh State - Central India) (Times of India Times Travel); Shimla and Manali – (Himachal Pradesh State - North India) (Rathore, 2019); and Kaziranga National Park (Assam State - East India) (NE Now News, 2020) - were chosen on the basis of media reports of popularity among tourists and the locational convenience of the three researchers working on this study. The dispersion of sample respondents across the country was specifically chosen as part of the research design in order to prevent any location bias and domicile bias in the sample.

For data collection, firstly, an intercept approach was adopted in and around tourist venues and national parks. Secondly, in two cases the questionnaire was handed over to hotel managers who got them filled by guests that showed interest and returned these by post to the authors. Of the 325 surveys filled in 288 were found to be usable for the purpose of this study as follows - Kerala, South India (58); Jaipur-West India (38); Agra-Central India (41); Corbett National Park – North India (47); Shimla- North India (N38); Manali- North India (26); Assam-East India (40). These were subjected to preliminary data coding, screening, and validation for missing value analysis and outlier identification. The scales were found to be reasonably reliable to very reliable with a Cronbach alpha between 0.79 (Nunnally, 1978) and 0.93 (Ursachi et al., 2015), considered to be an acceptable range. Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS 16) and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 20) were used for data analysis.

4. Results

4.1. Measurement model: Reliability and validity

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) showed that all factors had factor loadings above 0.6, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was found to be 0.832 which is significantly above the acceptance value of 0.7. Factor loadings of the constructs being high, it may be interpreted that there is significant correlation between items and factors. The study tested the construct validity of the scale items through convergent and discriminant validity as per the suggestions by Campbell and Fiske (1959). A loading of 0.7 and above indicated that the items can be attributed to the construct (Table 3). The values of AVE were found to be greater than 0.5 and the composite reliability also had values greater than 0.7; both suggesting the acceptability of the measurement model (Table 3). The reliability scores for all the constructs ranged between 0.79 and 0.93 which is much above the acceptance level of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1968).

Table 3
Reliability and convergent validity analysis

Factors	FL	AVE	CR	Cronbach alpha
Self-attributed need for uniqueness (SANU)				
To do something different	.71	.71	.75	.89
To escape the ordinary	.69			
To have unique, authentic experiences	.73			
Consumer need for uniqueness (CNFU)				
Create personal image	.67	.65	.82	.93
Choosing destination for establishing distinctive image	.66			
Against traditional destination	.60			
Travelling less popular destination	.60			
Challenging the usual taste for travelling	.71			
Enjoy being original	.68			
Preferred destination type				
Places with scenic beauty	.65	.65	.87	.79
Places of historical/cultural and archaeological interest	.69			
Mountains and hill stations	.60			
Places where I can see snowfall	.68			
An ocean/river cruise	.64			
Visiting national sanctuaries/national parks/ forests	.65			
Observing wildlife in its natural habitat	.67			
Places with rugged surroundings and minimum facilities	.62			
Visiting unique destinations	.69			
Activity preference				
Visiting villages and typical rural areas	.71	.68	.93	.91
Taking photographs/videos etc	.61			
To engage in physical activities to keep fit	.67			
Fishing	.71		.71	
Jungle exploring	.70			
Mountain climbing	.64			
Paragliding	.68			
Nature trips/Safaris	.74			
Camping	.68			
Rafting	.60			
Trekking	.71			
Rappelling (cliff descent using ropes)	.70			
Mountain biking	.68			
Motorcycling	.63			
Golfing/tennis	.71			

Note: FL=Factor Loading, CR=Composite Reliability, AVE=Average Variance Shared.
Source: Authors' survey.

Table 4 depicts the correlation among study variables and discriminant validity of the constructs. It can be observed from the results that the correlation among the study variables are significant and positive, thereby, establishing the initial support to the proposed hypotheses. In order to establish the discriminant validity amongst the construct, it is suggested that the square root values of average variance extracted should be greater than the correlation values of the variables, both row and column wise, the results demonstrated that the values of discriminant validity were greater than the correlation values of the constructs. Hence, it may be inferred that the values fully support the discriminant validity amongst the constructs Campbell and Fiske (1959).

Table 4
Mean, SD and correlations and discriminant validity among the variables (N=288)

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Gender	1.44	.49	1						
2. Age	1.53	.50	.14*	1					
3. Income	32.12	.91	-.00	-.21**	1				
4. SANU	4.33	.78	-.00	-.00	-.08	**.84**			
5. CNFU	3.67	.40	.02	.06	-.04	.31**	**.81**		
6. PDT	2.35	.42	-.03	.11*	.01	.45**	.30*	**.81**	
7. AP	3.78	.61	.09	-.08	-.01	.18**	.36**	.54**	**.82**

Note: **Significant at .01 level. Discriminant Validity (Square root of AVE) is shown diagonally.

Table 5 shows the indices fit for both the measurement model as well as the structural model. The values of GFI, AGFI, NFI, CFI and RMSEA were above the accepted level (Hair et al., 2010), hence, the model was deemed fit for further analysis. It may be inferred that the measurement and structural model reflect model fit, reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity.

Table 5
Measurement and structured model fitness level

Fit indices	Measurement model	Structural model	Recommended value	References
x^2/df	2.124	2.132	<5	Hair et al., (2010)
GFI	.911	.901	>0.90	
AGFI	.877	.874	>0.80	
NFI	.912	.910	>0.90	
CFI	.963	.965	>0.90	
RMSEA	.061	.064	<0.08	

Note: NFI minimum value is 0.80 (Hooper et al., 2008).

4.2. Hypotheses testing

The results in Table 6 support a significant relationship between SANU and CNFU, thereby providing empirical support for H1 (β =.31, p < .01). A positive relationship between CNFU and Preferred Destination Types fully supports the hypothesis H2 of the study (β =.28, p < .01). Also, a significant relationship between CNFU and Activity preference (H3) is proved by the result (β =.36, p < .01). Similarly, the moderating effects of SANU on CNFU and preferred destination relationship (β = .34, p < .01; Adj R^2 =.12), and the moderating effects of SANU on CNFU and activity preference relationship (β = .36, p < .01; Adj R^2 =.16) were all significant, thus supporting Hypotheses H4 and H5, respectively.

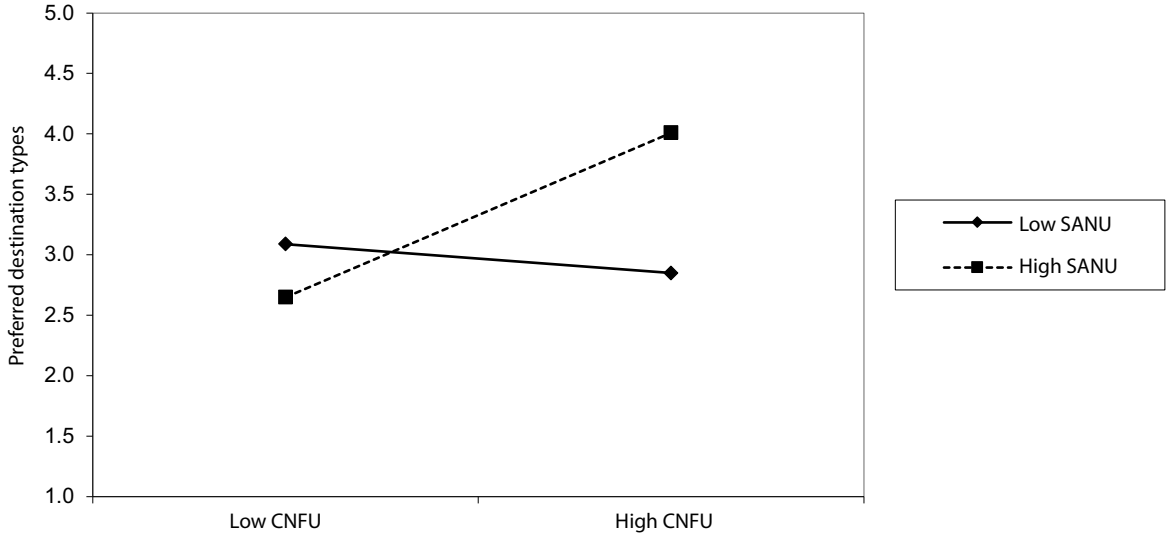
Table 6
Structural equation model evaluation and hypotheses testing outcomes

Hypotheses	Structural relationship		Std. coefficient	t value		Outcome
H1	SANU	→	CNFU	.31**	(-11.12)	Accepted
H2	CNFU	→	PDT	.28	(-10.28)	Accepted
H3	CNFU	→	AP	.36	(-12.27)	Accepted
H4	CNFU*SANU	→	PDT	.40	(-13.46)	Accepted (Moderation*)
H5	CNFU*SANU	→	AP	.42	(-14.36)	Accepted (Moderation*)

Note: **p<.05
Source: Authors' survey.

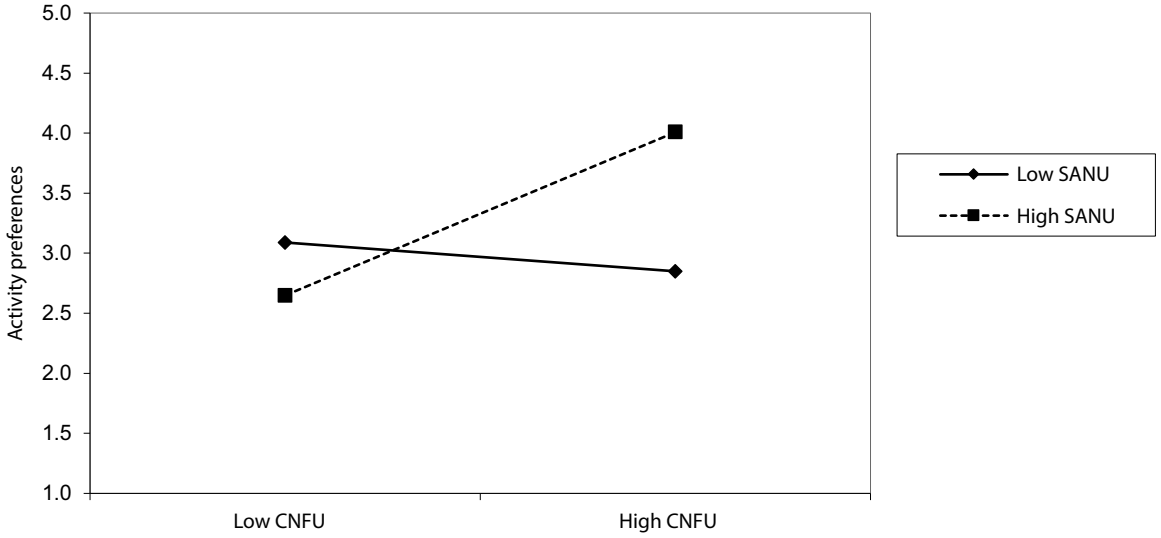
Figure 2 depicts the moderation analysis through simple slope. The results in the slope also depicted that high SANU leads to a stronger relationship between team CNFU and Preference destination types.

Figure 2
Moderating effect of SANU on the relationship between CNFU in tourists and preferred destination types



The moderation analysis of the relationship between CNFU in tourists and their activity preferences as moderated by SANU is also depicted in the simple slope in Figure 3. The results in the slope also depicted that SANU leads to a stronger relationship between CNFU and Activity Preference.

Figure 3
Moderating effect of SANU on relationship between CNFU in tourists and activity preferences



5. Discussion

The data has revealed certain interesting findings. The results (Table 4) show that SANU has an influence on CNFU in tourists ($\beta = 0.31$; $t = 11.12$; $p < 0.05$), hence supporting H1. This indicates that there is a manifestation of the trait SANU in the consumer behavior of an individual, in this case with regard to the expressed NFU in tourists. Thus, the psychological trait of SANU gets reflected in consumer dispositions of a tourist and may, therefore, influence his travel behavior. Specifically, the study investigated the influence of CNFU on two aspects of travel decision-making: the destination choice and activity participation while

on vacation. It may be seen from Table 4 that CNFU in tourists has a significant influence on Preferred Destination Types ($\beta = 0.28$; $t = 10.28$; $p < 0.05$), thereby indicating that H2 is supported. Past research indicates that high NFU consumers have more probability of choosing products that are unique/relatively scarce (Bhaduri & Stanforth, 2016). The results of our study suggest that this may be true for products such as tourism destinations as well. Though the results are not directly similar, yet previous research corroborates the influence of personality traits on destination choice and travel behavior. For instance, Lepp and Gibson (2008) showed that personality traits like sensation-seeking may have an effect on destination choices. In another study of domestic tourists in Kenya, trait factors were found to impact the choice of a destination (Mutinda & Mayaka, 2012). Pizam et al. (2004) have pointed out the role of two psychological factors, risk-taking and sensation-seeking on travel behavior. Moreover, Tran and Ralston (2006) asserted the influence of need for achievement and need for affiliation on preference for adventure tourism and cultural tourism respectively. Hence, there is indirect support for the influence of a psychological trait like NFU, manifested in consumer dispositions, to have an impact on travel related decisions such as choice of a vacation destination. Basala and Klenosky (2001) in an earlier study tried to assess the difference in behavior of novelty-seeking versus familiarity-seeking tourists with regard to the desire to visit a novel destination. Further, Yuncu (2016) found that two dimensions of CNFU i.e. creative choice and avoidance of similarity have an influence on the behavioral intentions of tourists. Zinelabidine et al. (2018) have also suggested that tourists may explore alternative holiday ideas driven by the need for uniqueness.

Again, Table 4 shows that CNFU in tourists significantly influences their Activity Preferences ($\beta = 0.36$; $t = 12.27$; $p < 0.05$), which means that H3 is supported. This is in line with the findings of Pizam et al. (2004) which highlight the role of risk-taking and sensation-seeking on activity choice. Even though this does not directly support the impact of CNFU, yet the influence of psychological attributes in the choice of travel activities has been reiterated. Chan et al. (2016) have also asserted that desire to consume unique goods and activities may be a significant driver of tourist behavior. Schneider and Vogt (2012) examined the influence of seven personality traits including need for uniqueness on adventure travel propensity. Even though they the results do not directly endorse the influence of NFU, yet they found sufficient evidence regarding the association between personality and travel behavior. The present study conducted in a different geographical context and with a specific objective of assessing the role of CNFU on activity and destination choice appears to reaffirm the relation between personality traits and travel decision making.

The study results confirm the moderating influence of SANU in the relationship between CNFU in tourists and their Preferred Destination Types ($\beta = 0.40$; $t = 13.46$; $p < 0.05$), thereby supporting H4. Moreover, the moderating influence of SANU on the relationship between CNFU in tourists and Activity Preferences has been supported by the data ($\beta = 0.42$; $t = 14.36$; $p < 0.05$), thus proving H5. Once again, the literature provides no support for these findings as SANU has not been used as a moderator previously. However, CNFU has been used as a moderator in studies pertaining to consumer behavior in the case of innovative and luxury products (Shao et al., 2019) though not in the context of tourism. These findings indicate that if an individual has high SANU, the impact of CNFU will be greater during his choice of vacation destinations and activity preferences as a tourist. Thus, an individual with more NFU, both as a psychological trait and as a consumer disposition, may prefer unique destinations and activities in comparison to those with lower SANU and CNFU.

5.1. Theoretical contributions

This study addresses a gap in literature pertaining to the role of NFU in the tourism context. By examining the relationship between CNFU and two important sub-decisions of travelers, namely, choice of travel destinations and activity preferences; the study contributes to the theory regarding impact of psychological traits or motivations on travel behavior. Further, the study investigates the moderating role of the psychological

construct SANU on the association between a consumer disposition and behavior. Previous studies have not utilized SANU as a moderator in the tourism context.

Regarding the geographic contribution, it may be pointed out that the influence of CNFU on the travel-related decisions; particularly, choice of destination type and activity preferences has not been examined in the Indian context. The geographical/cultural context is worth studying as Runco and Johnson (2002) argue that "implicit theories are influenced by cultural traditions and expectations". In India, as a society in transition from a collectivist to an individualistic one (Khare, 2011), CNFU and its three elements of Creative Choice Counter-conformity, Unpopular Choice Counter-conformity and Avoidance of Similarity (Tian et al., 2001) might all be at play when making decisions. In the Hofstede Insights framework, India "with a rather intermediate score of 48 is a society with both collectivistic and individualist traits" (Hofstede Insights, n.d.). India is a unique mix of both kinds of cultural orientations and offers a theoretically worthy context in which to study the expression of CNFU and SANU. These are constructs which were primarily construed as individualistic culture concepts and later validated in collectivistic societies too. However, they have not been studied extensively in a culture which has an almost equal mix of both orientations, and especially in the context of tourism choices. In a study by Jha and Singh (2011) in Northern India it was found that individualistic cultural orientation was uniformly high across locations and collectivistic cultural orientation was clearly lower in the major cities – signifying the creeping individualist tendencies in a hitherto predominantly collectivist culture. Further, Tripathi (1988) contends that "the Indian form of collectivism is unique as it has a strong streak of individualism". Additionally, it has been noted that Indians combine both orientations in a complex manner that the bipolarity of individualism-collectivism is unable to explain (Sinha et al., 2001). Jha and Singh (2011) further point out that differences within geographical locations in terms of collectivism and individualism are becoming more and more discernible in India owing to intense marketing by global brands, media communications and migration/travel abroad. All these factors point to the need for studying universal traits, like CNFU and SANU, in a uniquely transitioning/mixed cultural society such as India, which is one of the world's fastest growing tourist destinations (TNN, 2016; PTI, 2020). This is unlike consumer behavior trends in highly collectivistic societies where arguments have been made against excessive customization of products and services as Creative Choice Counter-conformity is more at play (Zhu et al., 2006). Hence, it is implied that tourism marketers purveying unique destination types and activities in India have a much larger scope for marketing successfully to Indian tourists. An increasing number of tourists in India are exploring out of the ordinary experiences in terms of uncommon destinations and activity types. Based on the study results, it seems as if among Indians, CNFU is a strong driver of consumer behavior as they self-attribute to themselves uniqueness motivations and the desire to stand out clearly from their peers when it comes to consuming products/services. Thus, the study establishes the role of CNFU in sub-decisions of travel as well as the moderating role of SANU.

5.2. Practical implications

The results support the contention that certain tourists (those exhibiting CNFU) would prefer out-of-the-ordinary activity types. Thus, highlighting the selective/exclusive nature of travel activities and branding these accordingly may be an effective strategy for attracting tourists with high CNFU (Chan et al., 2016). In fact, many travel providers are recognizing the need for unique travel activities and designing curated experiences and tours for such discerning travelers (Press Trust of India, 2019; Jain, 2018). Secondly, if most tourists go to popular destinations only, there would be a disproportionate load on infrastructure/facilities of such destinations and the overall tourism offerings would decline in quality. The negative environmental impacts of over tourism in certain destinations have been documented earlier (Koens et al., 2018; Nejati et al, 2014). In response, marketers could encourage tourists with CNFU proclivities to choose less visited, unique destinations using specially designed communications. Today, travel marketers are actually promoting lesser-known, less crowded and off-beat destinations as well as curated experiences/activities for tourists

(Peltier & Sheivachman, 2018). An understanding of the expectations of individuals with high SANU and high CNFU would enable better targeting and designing of appropriate promotional content and media to reach such tourists.

Moreover, tourist trips themselves can go from plain vanilla journeys to excitement filled ones using novel methods of transport. For instance, if the last mile of a rural visit could be on a bullock cart/horseback, this would appeal to CNFU individuals. Again, even within popular destinations, tourism marketers can target CNFU individuals to market unusual and unique activities. In highly competitive but underserved tourism markets such as in India, this could result in more targeted revenues, better quality offerings, higher profits, more customer satisfaction, and more targeted products for the CNFU tourist.

5.3. Limitations and future research

Notwithstanding the contributions, the study suffers from certain limitations. The study sample is restricted to a geographic context and hence the results may not be generalizable. Moreover, the inability to use random sampling technique due to the absence of a sampling frame represents another limitation. Future studies could explore the relevance of CNFU across countries and cultures. Moreover, no attempt has currently been made to delineate the profiles of high-NFU versus low-NFU segments of tourists. Marketers could develop more focused travel products and activity packages catering to specific interests of such segments in future research. The difference in decision-making behavior of tourists in case of high CNFU individuals versus those travelling in groups may also be explored. Marketers could have different appeals for individual versus group tourists and thereby create uniqueness by offering tourism products based on this categorization.

6. Conclusion

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between CNFU in tourists and two specific aspects of travel decision-making, namely the destination preferences and activity choices. The results support the contention that the psychological trait NFU, manifested in consumer dispositions, has an influence on travel related decisions such as preferences for activities and vacation destination. Moreover, the role of SANU in moderating the aforementioned associations has been established through the results. While at a broader theoretical level, the study contributes to the knowledge regarding the impact of psychological traits or motivations on travel behavior; it is also very relevant from a geographical perspective (the Indian context) where the dimensions of CNFU have been found to influence travel related decisions. Such an understanding of the expectations of individuals with high SANU/high CNFU would enable destination marketers to develop more effective marketing strategies and design appropriate promotional content for tourists seeking unique travel destinations and experiences. Marketers could develop more focused travel products and activity packages catering to specific interests of such tourists using the insights gained through this study.

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